



To: First Things First
 From: Advocacy & Communication Solutions, LLC
 Subject: Strategic Communications Plan - Summary of Stakeholder Feedback
 Date: December 2012

In order to gather feedback on the First Things First (FTF) Strategic Communication Plan, an online survey and series of focus groups were conducted among FTF staff and current and recent members of regional partnership councils. Feedback from FTF staff and council members were used to inform the development of the focus groups and will be used in the rewrite of the Strategic Communications Plan.

The survey gathered information about:

- The perception of the Strategic Communication Plan and its implementation;
- The use of FTF resources such as the website and social media to obtain and share information;
- Engagement in training sessions and activities related to the Strategic Communication Plan; and
- How to better engage specific priority audiences as champions of early childhood education.

Of the 360 people who received the strategic communication plan survey, 171 regional council members and 35 FTF staff members responded. In addition to the survey, several RPC members and FTF expressed willingness to participate in a focus group on strategic communications. The table below highlights the significant responses from the survey that will inform the development of the next Strategic Communication Plan.

Table I: Common Themes from the Survey	
Strategic Communication Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 92% of respondents identified the need to build and drive support for early childhood education. • Respondents believe there has been progress on communication goals, but more work is necessary to achieve the goals. • More than 70% of RPC members prefer either face-to-face training during council meetings or community trainings that members and staff are invited to.
Raising Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than half of the respondents identified public recognition of FTFs name and mission, public awareness of ECE, and support from public officials as the most significant improvements in their community. • Nearly 70% of RPC members identified Community Outreach (group presentations, relationship building, etc...) as <u>the most</u> successful tactic in their region. • Respondents identified the need to raise citizen, parent and public officials' awareness of FTF. • Talking one on one to community members and taking community leaders on site visits were identified as ways to help get stakeholders to champion early childhood.
Communicating ECE Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 66% of respondents use FTF websites in communications efforts in their community. • 70% of respondents do not use social media platforms to disseminate information to community. • Stakeholders believe direct person to person forms of communication are the most successful communication tactics.

Participation In Strategic Communication Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community volunteerism and small group meetings are the most engaged-in communication activities. Where RPC members said they did not participate in activities, the top three reasons cited were 1) they are not asked; 2) not enough time; and 3) they were not aware of the opportunity to participate.
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As a follow up to the Stakeholder Survey completed in October 2012, six focus groups were held statewide in November and December 2012 to gather more in-depth information from Regional Partnership Council members and key staff on the strategic communication plan. Forty-six people participated in the focus groups around the state; 26 participants were RPC members and 20 were staff.

The Focus Groups gathered information about:

- How to better engage specific priority audiences as champions of early childhood education;
- The use of social media in messaging;
- FTF support of Regional Partnership Council members to help raise public awareness; and
- Perceived challenges and strategies for the implementation of the updated Strategic Communication Plan.

The table below highlights the significant responses from the focus groups that will inform the development of the next Strategic Communication Plan.

Table 2: Common Themes from the Focus Groups	
Engaging Priority Audiences as Champions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants believe that engaging religious communities is best done through 1) leveraging existing relationships, 2) engaging churches in the ECE community through events, and 3) identifying and partnering with churches that have preschool programs. Both staff and RPC members believe that reaching the senior population can be done through 1) grandparent and foster grandparent programs, 2) existing volunteer groups that connect seniors with children, and 3) intergenerational facilities. Participants believe outreach to the medical community can be done through 1) discovery and training sessions for medical professionals, 2) increasing communication materials available in medical offices, and 3) leveraging existing relationships with RPCs and grantees who are part of the medical community. Participants believe 1) data driven messaging, 2) funding programs that specifically connect ECE and K-12 and 3) using common terms to align FTF with the community (common core) are the best ways to reach out to the K-12 audience.
Using Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If FTF wants more people to use social media to promote FTF (specifically) or early childhood broadly, then FTF must 1) make it easy to engage in social media; 2) tell people <u>why</u> using social media will move the needle with each specific audience; 3) provide training and support to get started; and 4) include regional specific information.
FTF support of Regional Partnership Council Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Partnership Council Members want to do more – they just need to be asked, they want a call to action, and they may need some support (training, data or materials). RPC members and staff feel continuing to include a ‘Call to Action’ to every message will help engage champions of ECE. People strongly believe that RPC members and grantees can be better equipped to be Champions through training, talking points and continuous engagement.

Implementation of the Strategic Communication Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are regional considerations related to internet accessibility, geographic distance, and community structure that have important implications on how the Strategic Communication Plan will be implemented in some rural areas. • There is broad enthusiasm for the potential of the future strategic communication plan. Sharing the goals and how everyone can be part of the implementation throughout the process will be key to success. • Lack of continuous engagement with existing champions is a major barrier in leveraging champions.
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Summary of findings

The combined results of the online survey and the focus groups confirm that FTF is on the right track in its overall communication efforts. There is a strong interest and energy level among Regional Partnership Council members in particular to be engaged deeply and regularly in strategic communication efforts. The survey and focus groups also gave important guidance in areas where RPC members and staff believe there are opportunities for improvement.